

Frome Urban District Council.

REPORT of the Medical Officer for the Year ending December 31st, 1909.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I am sorry to say that my report of the health of Frome cannot be as favourable as last year, although there have been fewer cases of notifiable zymotic disease and no deaths from notifiable diseases. The general death-rate has risen and the birth-rate has fallen. Severe weather in the first few months of the year caused the deaths of many old people. There were 44 deaths of persons over 75. Of these 14 were over 80, 8 were over 85, and 7 over 90 years of age. These represent 28 per cent. of the total deaths registered.

Constantly changing weather and dark days were characteristic of the year. A few fine weeks in August were all we had of continuous sunshine. The year was marked by the excessive number of days on which rain fell. October was the wettest month of the year and February the only dry month—a most unusual occurrence.

I append the statistics of the monthly rainfall:—

	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.
Jan. ... 1.10	May ... 1.58	Sept. ... 4.73	
Feb. ... .74	June ... 3.16	Oct. ... 7.15	
Mar. 4.05	July ... 2.73	Nov. ... 1.34	
Apr. ... 2.08	Aug. ... 2.72	Dec. ... 5.67	
Total, 1909, 37.05 inches ; 1908, 30.24 ; 1907, 34.57.			

The number of births registered during the year was 184, as against 222 in 1908, 194 in 1907, and 229 in 1906. With the exception of the recovery of last year this shows a continuously dropping birth-rate. This has been noted all over England, and in spite of our improved sanitary methods and medical treatment I fear our population is not increasing. The male births were 87 and the female 97. There were 5 illegitimate births, 2 in private houses and 3 in the Workhouse Infirmary. In 1908 there were 6 illegitimate births, in 1907 10, and in 1906 14. The birth-rate works out at 16.34 per 1,000 of the population, as against 19.72 in 1908, 17.26 in 1907, and 20.37 in 1906. The average birth-rate for the last ten years is 21.55.

There has been a large decrease in notifiable infectious disease. We had 39 cases in 37 houses this year, as against 71 cases in 54 houses in 1908. This is very satisfactory, especially in regard to the very few scarlatina cases which were found and checked in the onset. The scarlatina appeared mainly in the early part of the year and was a continuation of the mild epidemic of 1908. Only one case of a bad type has occurred. This was a lad from Clutton, where there has been a bad epidemic. He was a boarder at a school in the town. He was promptly removed to the Isolation Hospital and recovered after a severe illness. No other case appeared and the school was re-opened in a week. All the other cases were of a mild type.

Diphtheria has been notified 8 times, each case in a different residence. I very much doubt if all these cases were diphtheria. The disease has in no instance been communicated to others, and, as I remarked last year in the same connection, some of these notifications, though justified, may have been premature.

The notifications in detail were : scarlatina, 25 ; diphtheria, 8 ; enteric fever, 1 ; erysipelas, 5. I am by no means convinced that the case notified as enteric fever was really so. There were 11 cases of scarlatina treated in the Isolation Hospital during the year. They all recovered and the hospital was empty on January 31st.

I also received 7 notifications—one in duplicate—of 6 cases of pulmonary tuberculosis, occurring in "Poor Persons," as required by the new Public Health (Tuberculosis) Act.

There have been no deaths from notifiable zymotic diseases, but 3 deaths from diarrhoea occurred during the summer months.

The deaths registered in 1909 were 156, an increase of 15 over 1908, but less than in 1907, when 164 occurred.

I append the tables of time, age, and causation.

	I.	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.
January, February, March	...	44	59	40	61
April, May, June	...	49	39	40	37
July, August, September	...	28	29	34	27
October, November, December	29	37	27	31	
	—	—	—	—	
	150	164	141	156	
	II.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
Under 1 year ...	...	16	27	18	13
From 1 to 5 years	...	4	8	1	10
", 5 to 15 years	...	10	3	6	2
", 15 to 25 years	...	3	7	1	8
", 25 to 65 years	...	44	42	44	56
Over 65 years ...	...	73	77	71	67
	—	—	—	—	
	150	164	141	156	
	III.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
Zymotic diseases	...	6	14	3	3
Other septic ...	...	6	1	6	5
Tubercular ...	...	10	11	8	11
Malignant ...	...	5	8	11	13
Apoplexy ...	...	15	6	5	6
Nervous system ...	...	8	0	12	7
Circulatory system ...	...	18	29	26	25
Respiratory organs ...	...	20	35	9	11
Digestive organs ...	...	2	7	4	14
Excretory organs ...	...	5	0	6	7
Alcoholism and Cirrhosis of Liver	...	3	1	4	1
Premature birth ...	...	3	5	4	2
Age ...	...	36	27	28	35
Injuries ...	...	4	2	6	4
All other causes ...	...	9	18	9	12
	—	—	—	—	
	150	164	141	156	

IV.

ZYMATIC DISEASES:-		1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.
Enteric fever	0	0	0
Measles	1	3	0
Scarlatina	0	1	1
Diarrhoea	3	3	1
Whooping cough	0	7	0
Diphtheria	2	0	1
		—	6	14	3
			—	—	3

V.

CAUSES OF INFANTILE DEATHS:-

		1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.
Zymotic	2	11	1
Congenital	5	5	10
Malnutrition	2	0	1
Respiratory	4	7	1
Other causes	3	4	5
		—	16	27	18
			—	—	13

Forty-six deaths have been registered from public institutions in the town. In the Workhouse Infirmary there were 34, of these 12 were non-resident in the district. Twelve deaths were registered from the Victoria Hospital, 5 being non-resident.

I have calculated the death-rates on an estimated population of 11,260, the same as last year. I think there can have been little increase or decrease.

	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.
General death-rate per 1,000 living ...	13.34	14.59	12.52	13.85
Ditto, allowing for non-residents ...	12.01	13.34	11.63	12.34
Zymotic death-rate ...	.533	1.245	.266	.266
Infantile death-rate per 1,000 births ...	69.86	139.17	76.58	70.7

We have had 11 deaths from diseases of the respiratory organs, as against 9 last year. Most of these happened in the early part of the year. Since then the general mild and damp weather has benefited those suffering from bronchial complaints. The deaths from malignant disease have increased by 2 since 1908. Deaths due to tuberculosis were 11—about the average number. The increase in the number of deaths from old age is largely accountable for the increased number of deaths for the year. We still have a great improvement in the infantile death-rate. This year it is 70.7 per 1,000 births. The average for the last 10 years is 101.32.

The sanitary condition of the district is satisfactory, and I know of no conditions threatening to endanger public health. Some cases of unhealthy and dangerous houses have

been brought before me, and with your Sanitary Inspector, these cases have been inspected and defects remedied or the premises closed. I wish that the Council would insist that all closets should be provided with a water flush.

The house accommodation is still improving. Many obsolete and ruinous places have been demolished, and better residences have taken their places. The number of inhabited houses is 2,993, the same as in 1908. The average number of persons per house is 3.76, calculated on an estimated population of 11,260.

The chief occupations in Frome are textile manufacturing, printing, brewing and engineering.

The geological structure of the district is oolite and alluvium.

We have a sufficiency of open spaces.

The water supply of the town is excellent in quality and quantity, and never fails.

The river Frome is always muddy owing to the clay soil through which it runs, but is not injuriously polluted in any way.

I have had no complaints about the sewage stench this year, but on account of nature's continual flush of the sewers I barely expected to have any. Almost every house in Frome is now connected with the main sewers. The sewage is properly and systematically treated.

The sanitary condition of the elementary schools is good. The Council Schools (lately the British) have been rebuilt and enlarged. On no occasion during the year have I had to advise the closure of any elementary school.

The lodging-houses, slaughter-houses, dairies, cowsheds, bakehouses, factories, and workshops have been systematically inspected.

Notifications of all scheduled infectious diseases are always duly sent to me.

I am glad that steps are at last being taken to enlarge and give an extra ward to the Isolation Hospital. It has been a great help to the Sanitary Officers during the past year, and will be a greater help in the future. I wish that a proper chamber could be provided for the disinfection of linen and clothes.

Your Sanitary Officers have been most prompt and helpful in every case, and I wish to thank them.

I wish to thank you, also, gentlemen, for your unvarying courtesy.

Your obedient Servant,

FREDERICK PARSONS,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 28, 1910.

FROME URBAN DISTRICT
COUNCIL.

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

For the Year 1909.